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## Sharing Responsibility for Eye Health

WINIFRED HATHAWAY

*Associate Director, National Society for the Prevention of Blindness,  
New York*

In a thought-provoking article appearing in *The Elementary English Review*,<sup>1</sup> Dr. B. R. Buckingham very logically makes the following statement:

If I say, as I do say emphatically, that reading deficiency is quite generally language deficiency, I necessarily leave out of account the special visual apparatus upon which reading depends. If a child can't see, or if his vision is distorted, obviously his reading will be affected, perhaps quite independently of his ability to speak and write. The plain duty under those circumstances is to correct the visual defect; and normally this isn't the teacher's job.

Everyone will doubtless agree with Dr. Buckingham that "normally this isn't the teacher's job," but that agreement, must, naturally, be followed by the questions, Just whose job is it? Does the teacher have any share in the responsibility? The obvious answer would seem to be that anyone and everyone who is responsible in any way for prevention—prevention of eye difficulties; prevention of reading difficulties; prevention of in-

hibitions and psychological reactions that are likely to follow in the wake of physical difficulties—has a part in seeing that the job is done. This should be evident from the principles that Dr. Buckingham has so well set forth regarding what he terms "communications."

Now in communication we deal with symbols. Indeed, if I had time and you were disposed to listen to me, I think I could establish the fact that a really fundamental view of the work of the school will recognize that most of it has to do with arbitrary signs to which meaning is attached by social agreement. Certainly this is true in learning to use the mother tongue. In this field it is not too much to say that all learning and all evidences of learning are of two kinds. On the one hand the symbols are received and acted upon as meanings. On the other hand the meanings are received and acted upon as symbols.

If symbols are unintelligible for any reason, physical or psychological, lan-

<sup>1</sup> "Language and Reading." A Unified Program, B. R. Buckingham, *The Elementary English Review*, March, 1940, pp. 111-116.

guage and reading must be affected. Perhaps it will be well to sum up some of the activities of those who have felt it their responsibility along very definite lines to prevent many of the eye troubles that are now a cause of reading failure.

First is the group composed of those sufficiently interested in preventive measures to begin at the beginning. It is recognized by all who have any knowledge of eye difficulties that syphilis takes a heavy toll. Who has not seen the child with an iris like ground glass, bespeaking the possibility of syphilis transmitted from the mother to the foetus . . . or the child with partial optic nerve atrophy or a peculiar affection of the retina, the picture-making film of the eye, that gradually shuts off peripheral vision and narrows down visual acuity until finally the child becomes blind? The cause of these, too, may be the spirochete. So active has been the particular group that is especially interested in preventing eye and other difficulties resulting from this cause, that thirty states have passed laws prohibiting the marriage of persons with communicable venereal diseases. Seventeen states have passed laws requiring the examination of the expectant mother and treatment, if such is found necessary, because some still earlier beginners have proved that through this method the transmission of syphilis with all its subsequent ravages can definitely be prevented. These efforts are the beginning of cutting down diseases of the eye and numerous other difficulties that may be traced to venereal diseases.

Has the teacher any responsibility related to the work of this group and these measures? What about her contact with parents? If she is a real teacher, parents look to her as a source of information. She has innumerable opportunities for educating parents and, indeed, her commun-

ity to understand these laws and the need for them. For only through understanding can co-operation be gained.

It would seem that the great majority of people have been educated to the necessity of the care of the child's eyes at birth. Yet statistics show that there are still altogether too many cases of blindness and impaired vision from birth infections. Where is the teacher who has not at some time had in her group a child with a clouded eye window, or a scar that so interferes with vision as to cause a blotting out of certain parts of letters or words—a definite cause of reading difficulties? There is still room for instruction along this line by the educator whether such educator be doctor, nurse, social worker, or teacher.

Another line of defense is held by those whose work is with the young child. During this time there may arise difficulties of muscle imbalance that may later result in double vision (and how can a child with double vision distinguish between m's and n's; a's and o's; 7's and 9's?). Or, in order to prevent this difficulty, there may be suppression of the sight of the affected eye in order that one clear image may reach the brain. Where is the teacher who would not prevent this if she could by stressing the necessity for early attention to muscle deviations?

Another line of defense is the summer round-up; the principle back of this effort is that if physical defects can be cared for before the child enters school, he and the teacher have just that much more advantage of making use of what education has to offer. Here, again, the teacher shares responsibilities and opportunities. A fine beginning has been made but better equipped troops are necessary to hold this line of defense. The more responsibility the school takes for the pre-school child, the greater will be the edu-

cational advances in general and the greater will be the decrease in reading failures and the necessity for remedial work.

Among those who have given the teacher suggestions for preventive measures are Stanger and Donohue<sup>1</sup> who indicate numerous ways and means of discovering deviations of the eye from the normal that may lead to that troublesome business, reversals in reading. Would not the teacher who is armed in advance with the knowledge of what difficulties may arise from this source give careful attention to selecting methods of teaching reading that may help her to prevent not only actual failure but accompanying discouragement and possible antipathy?

There is a terse biblical saying, "The poor you have with you always"—not only the poor in this world's goods but the poor in spirit and the poor in physical being. The in-service teacher must meet the difficulties in the last-named group, difficulties that may be the result of lack of preventive measures or that may have proved to be not amendable to such. She is daily faced with the problem as it exists and regret that it is too bad preventive measures were not taken before the child attended school is of no value either to her or to the child in finding a solution.

In well equipped communities it is, as Dr. Buckingham has stated, not the teacher's job to undertake the correction of vision defects. It is doubtful if it is ever her job to take the full responsibility, but there are certain parts of the job for which every teacher should be held accountable. Chief among these is the discovery that there is an eye difficulty where such exists. Many such deviations are not apparent until the child begins to use his eyes for close work, but even be-

fore he begins to read, the teacher trained in observation may notice certain reactions, such as bringing objects close to the eyes in order to see; squinting; screwing up the face; having no interest in objects or people beyond arm's reach; having interest only in distant objects; blinking constantly; holding the head on one side using only one eye; also such symptoms as sties, red eyelids, tearing, irritation, white crusts on lids, etc. To let these go unnoticed is to add to the problems of the child and the teacher. It does definitely become every teacher's responsibility to see at least that the next step is taken, whatever that may be. In general, this is to report the child to the school nurse who will give the needed eye tests and, if necessary, carry the case to the school physician with the following step of notification of the parents, since the responsibility for obtaining correction or treatment is primarily theirs.

But it is indeed a poor system that permits the matter to rest at that point, for follow-up is essential to success and many parents either will not or cannot fulfil their obligations. Nurses, visiting teachers and social workers have a responsibility for such follow-up. The teacher's responsibility does not end at the taking of this first step. If glasses are necessary it may not be within her province to see that they are provided, but, having been provided, it is her decided duty to see that the child wears them and keeps them clean. It is her duty, further, to help him by having the other children understand something of the use of glasses or other helpful devices, such as occlusion of the good eye in muscle imbalance, and thus gain their co-operation in encouraging those who need these aids. All too often the taunts of classmates have caused children to discard the help that might keep the world a happy place for them.

<sup>1</sup>*Prediction and Prevention of Reading Difficulties*, Margaret A. Stanger and Ellen K. Donohue, 191 pp., New York: Oxford University Press, 1937.

In small communities without adequate facilities and in poorly equipped rural areas, the teacher has an even greater responsibility. A stream may be shallow enough to enable one to wade across or it may be narrow enough that one may jump across. But if it is neither, a bridge is necessary and the teacher must usually be the one to bridge the gap. She must often find ways and means of getting treatment or correction and, indeed, of obtaining glasses if these are necessary. Social Security laws are opening the way for much help but it is necessary for the teacher to become familiar with resources in order that she may make use of them in time of need.

The following actual cases may demonstrate what is likely to happen in any school if the teacher shirks her share of responsibility.

Anne attended a private school of high standing. The teacher found that she had good background and experiences, did excellent oral work, but was an exceedingly poor reader. The eye test indicated the need for a thorough ophthalmological examination and word to that effect was sent home to the parents. Although they were well educated people with ample means for good medical care, they did nothing and there was no follow-up on the part of the school.

The next year the eye test showed a worse condition although, curiously enough, Anne's reading had improved considerably and some of her nervousness had disappeared. Again notice was sent home with the former results. A friend of the family, a trained medical social worker, was visiting the home and noticed that Anne was using only one eye in reading. She inquired about school records. Anne's mother told of the notices that had come two years in succession but stated that the child was so busy with

extra-mural activities—dancing, swimming, tennis, etc.—that there had not been time for medical attention. The medical social worker tactfully arranged matters.

A muscle imbalance was suspected, but it was found that one of Anne's eyes was so highly astigmatic that practically all letters blurred beyond recognition. Since the brain could not fuse the clear image from the good eye and the blurred image from the poor one, the latter gave up trying to function. Naturally, when only the clear image from the one eye was received, Anne's reading improved, but at the cost of a practically useless eye, and a loss in fusion and depth perception! Following the thorough medical examination it was possible to compensate for the astigmatism with glasses, but a long period of training was necessary to re-educate the astigmatic eye to work at all and then to work in co-operation with its fellow. The good eye had to be occluded in order to make the other assume its share of the seeing process.

All of this might have been avoided if the eye difficulty had been discovered early, if the parents had acted on the advice of the school or if there had been adequate follow-up. In this school the classes were very small, thus giving the teacher an opportunity for individual instruction and attention. Since Anne needed remedial reading and had been receiving individual attention for this, it would seem that the teacher was exceedingly lacking in observation not to have noted that she was using only one eye.

Esmeralda was a mirror writer and reader. Just as in taking a photograph the image is upside down on the film or plate and must be printed to bring it right side up, so the image on the retina, the picture-making film of the eye, is upside down and must, through some pro-



cess of the brain, be shifted to its correct position. If this power is lacking in the brain little can be done; if it is present and its function is being interfered with by various influences, much can usually be accomplished. But what these influences are must be determined.

Although for Esmeralda's teacher, mirror reading and writing were new experiences, she accepted her responsibility and made every effort to find out why the child held her book upside down and read from right to left and why she followed the same procedure in writing. An eye test showed no eye difficulty but the teacher realized that the child was in exceedingly rundown physical condition and was very nervous. Visits to the home showed that Esmeralda lived in an atmosphere of continued fear and apprehension because of the brutality of her father when he was intoxicated, and this was usually the case.

The teacher immediately got in touch with a social agency equipped to take care of this problem. A thorough medical examination was arranged for and the suggestions of the doctors followed. A foster home was found for Esmeralda; her general health was built up through proper food and rest and with the removal of the fear element, much of the child's nervousness disappeared. The teacher gave individual attention to her reading difficulties and gradually the child began to hold the book in the correct position. With the book right side up, the change in reading from left to right was made without too great effort. The writing problem was somewhat more difficult of solution; the change came very gradually and for some time if Esmeralda were hurried or flustered she reverted to mirror writing.

With the building up of the physical condition and with infinite patience on

the part of the teacher, at the end of a two-year period the difficulty had entirely disappeared. In this case the teacher, realizing that there were problems connected with the reading difficulty that did not come within her province, acted as a contact between the family and the social agency equipped to undertake the necessary adjustment. By assuming her share of the responsibility she was influential in changing the child's life.

John, seventeen, was due to leave the eighth grade of a consolidated school. He had been pushed from class to class with very little accomplishment and was considered mentally deficient by all his teachers. His parents, who had had little educational opportunity, were most anxious for him to go to high school. In order to prove to them that the boy would be incapable of carrying on high school work, the principal took the opportunity offered by a university to have a mental test given. John tested 65 I.Q.

An educator especially interested in eye work visited the school about this time and heard John's story. She asked to see the mental tests that had been given and found that practically all of them required close eye use. She gave John an eye test and found he was suffering from exceedingly low vision; he was unable to see the printed page and had evidently seen nothing placed on the blackboard throughout the years. An eye examination was arranged. Properly fitted with glasses, John's vision was greatly improved and when given the same test which he was now able to see, his I.Q. proved to be 98! It is difficult to believe that he had been under the direction of eight different teachers in this school, not one of whom had discovered that he had an eye difficulty.

Helen had been obliged to have an eye enucleated. She had been fitted with

# Partners In War Relief

JAMES T. NICHOLSON

*National Director*

*American Junior Red Cross*

*Washington, D. C.*

IN MAY, 1940, the Red Cross appealed to the country for twenty million dollars to be used exclusively in giving assistance to the sick and wounded, the hungry and homeless refugees overseas. The question of participation by the Junior Red Cross members in the War Relief Fund was discussed with leaders in the field of school administration who met in Washington as members of the Educational Advisory Committee. Subsequently the recommendations of the Committee were submitted to the members of the Junior Red Cross, themselves, through their own National Delegates Advisory Committee. The Delegates Advisory Committee endorsed the plan which provided an opportunity for girls and boys of the United States to share in such humanitarian service. The eight million members of the Junior Red Cross responded promptly to the call and within a few weeks had contributed to the War Relief Fund over \$200,000, most of the contributions being raised through ingenious and resourceful group enterprises. The response far exceeded expectations as the appeal was issued very late in the school year. Many schools had already closed for the summer, many were about to do so. In this way the girls and boys of the Junior Red Cross, through their National Children's Fund, shared with adults throughout the nation, and became partners with them in the creation of Red Cross resources to be used in assisting to meet widespread human suffering. The young people's share in this endeavor has been

administered to provide assistance for children caught in the maelstrom of war.

The Red Cross has provided medical supplies, hospital equipment, ambulances, food and clothing for sick and wounded soldiers and for the distressed civilians. The service of the young members of the Junior Red Cross has been devoted to the health and comfort of children, and as a component part of the general Red Cross war relief program.

In England, where the repeated air raids have forced families to flee from their homes leaving all their possessions behind, there was great need for children's clothing. Also, there was grave need for adequate housing for these homeless children. The sum of \$50,000 was appropriated from the Junior Red Cross National Children's Fund to provide immediate relief. Under the Chairmanship of the Dowager Marchioness of Reading, the Women's Voluntary Services with that appropriation have established country homes for these children under five years of age. Forty children are cared for in each cottage under the supervision of child welfare specialists, house mothers, and others.

In addition to the fund for homes in the country, \$25,000 worth of clothing and bedding has been donated to care for the emergency needs of children evacuated from areas endangered by air-raids, and \$500 has been allotted for the purchase of books and toys in an effort to sustain the morale of children evacuated to the country from cities under bombardment. Further assistance to children in Great

Britain will continue as effective projects for the benefit of children become adopted as a part of general relief activities of the American Red Cross.

In an effort to provide some measure of Christmas cheer for the children in air-raided shelters, hospitals and improvised homes, the members of the Junior Red Cross filled thirty thousand gift cartons measuring approximately five by seven inches bearing the message "Greetings from the American Junior Red Cross." The boxes were filled with small toys, colored pencils, handkerchiefs and other gifts dear to children's hearts. They were dispatched to the British Junior Red Cross and the Women's Voluntary Service, the latter being the largest civilian relief organization in Great Britain, and official agency.

In Finland \$20,000 was expended for the purchase of clothing and bedding to supplement the dresses, shirts, sweaters and other garments made by the women volunteer workers of the Red Cross for children made refugees by the invasion of their country. The distribution was effectively administered by the Finnish Red Cross Society. Holiday boxes of toys and other gifts have gone forth to those children left homeless by the invasion of Finland.

In that central portion of Poland called now "The General Government," there was serious need for warm clothing and bedding for children, victims of the invasion and by the transfer of populations which occurred later. An appropriation of \$20,000 from the Junior Red Cross fund was made to meet this need. The clothing and bedding were sent in addition to those items such as children's dresses, boys' blouses, layettes which were made by members of the American Junior Red Cross in association with the members of the Production Corps, American

Red Cross. Their initial distribution was supervised in Warsaw and Cracow by the National Director of the American Junior Red Cross. Subsequent distributions were observed and inspected by American Red Cross representatives in the Lublin and Radom districts. They reached the children for whom they were intended without confiscation or diversion.

Early in the great war, refugees from Holland and Belgium poured into France and soon thereafter their number was augmented by thousands of French refugees. To help meet the needs of these helpless people, the Red Cross purchased medical and hospital supplies, clothing and food sufficient to provide a full cargo for the steamship McKeesport. On this "Mercy Ship" was loaded \$25,000 worth of clothing and supplementary foods purchased through the National Children's Fund, American Junior Red Cross. While the McKeesport was enroute, France capitulated and an armistice was signed. Consequently, the ship, destined first for the port of Bordeaux, was sent to Marseilles. There her cargo was landed and distribution of the supplies was made in the unoccupied France by representatives of the American Red Cross through local French agencies. The assistance rendered by the supplies of the American Junior Red Cross was particularly helpful, due to the great number of lost, orphan and destitute children who had been concentrated in Southern France. The American Junior Red Cross supplies consisted of children's underwear, hosiery, boys' shirts, blouses, trousers, blankets, sheets, pillow cases, evaporated milk, concentrated soups, chocolate, sweet milk, cocoa, and prepared baby foods.

When the refugees in Paris and vicinity reached vast proportions, there was great use for milk and nourishing food for the children. An appropriation of

\$25,000 was made out of the National Children's Fund and sent to the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva, the federating organization of the Red Cross societies throughout the world. From the allocation, the League purchased evaporated and condensed milk and other supplementary foods in Switzerland for distribution among the sick and hungry children in Central France. Pending the organization of general relief, these food supplies helped to aid promptly those children who suffered most acutely through the social dislocations in France caused by the invasion and the resulting flight of refugees through the Paris area.

The American Red Cross is constantly advised of social emergencies as they arise throughout the world and is ready and desirous of rendering all possible relief to distressed peoples in any country where needs exist. Moreover, it requires that safe conduct of relief supplies must be guaranteed and that there will be sufficient freedom of action and supervision of distribution through its responsible observers *to make certain that aid goes to those for whom it is intended*, and on the basis of need. In these ministrations to the victims of war, the girls and boys of the Junior Red Cross—the school children of America—may share in meeting the needs of suffering children. The Red Cross is providing the channel for the practical application of the highest ideals of international relationships and responsibilities to its adult members. In corresponding measure it is opening these channels to the millions of elementary and secondary school pupils who constitute the membership of the American Junior Red Cross, through the National Children's Fund. There is abundant proof that these young members are profiting greatly through their experience as partners in a great social enterprise.

Adult activities are usually not very appealing to children. They become so, however, when they reflect situations which children, themselves, experience. This is particularly true of those idealistic and humanitarian endeavors which appeal to their warm sympathies.

An organization such as the American Red Cross which moves rapidly and efficiently to extend relief to human sufferers from ravages of war, tornado, flood and famine, appeals to young people because of the fast, dramatic action and because children have been affected by the catastrophe and are in need of help. Moreover the American Red Cross has accorded to children in the public, parochial and private schools of the country a definite place in its membership, has accepted them as active partners in its work. The girls and boys of the American Junior Red Cross, the American Red Cross in the schools, are regarded as constituent members of the parent organization.

The continuing program of the Red Cross provides practical participation by the Junior Red Cross. Training in first aid and life saving, in accident prevention, home hygiene and care of the sick, is available to the member. They have their own organization of high school groups ready for action when disasters occur in this country. Their partnership affords experience in the solving of practical problems of stern reality instead of improvisation and make believe. In this manner, school children of the Junior Red Cross have shared with adult groups throughout the country in the task of the American Red Cross by giving relief to the peoples of a war torn Europe. They have been given outlets emotionally and educationally sound for extending aid to the children in the war affected countries in an effective and efficient manner.



# Proving Ground For Elementary Reading Reforms<sup>\*</sup>

NELLIE M. SEEDS

*Specialist in Curriculum and Teacher Education  
Education and Training Section  
Work Projects Administration*

FOR YEARS our advanced educators have advocated more intelligent planning of elementary reading courses. There are large groups who, like Dr. Arthur I. Gates of Columbia University<sup>1</sup>, recommend the replacement of many of the classical works now used in our schools with homely tales, simply told. They believe that these tales should have a high degree of dramatic appeal and a close association in subject matter with the interests of childhood.

This is no new idea. For the past quarter century, progressive educators have advocated it. Boards of education have heard the plea. They have listened, and some have heeded.

The expense involved in a change of course has been a definite deterrent. Some agree with Dr. Gates that the primary deterrent lies in the fact that the classic reading "diet" planned for our public school readers is dear to the hearts of the small group of literary experts whose job it has been to determine its content. Those who advocate a change stress the fact that an increasing number of children are becoming less and less inclined to read beyond the required course. The radio, of course, has some bearing on the problem. But, they say, if good reading habits and reading tastes are formed in the early grades of school by intelligent plan-

ning and proper teaching, nothing can destroy the child's interest or enjoyment of reading as a leisure-time activity. Radio dramas of the proper type, educational features with a background of history and adventure, but whet the appetite for the history and romantic lore to be found between the pages of a good book. Many believe that for the child with a properly cultivated reading taste, cheap fiction will lose its appeal.

It is true that the result of having reading programs that bore children has been not only to develop a high percentage of "compulsory readers" but also a disturbingly large number of slow readers who drop behind their classes each year—some rebellious, others incapable of assimilating the material assigned.

To meet this latter problem the schools have gone so far as to have special classes for slow readers. But many have provided no special material for them. In these schools, the slower children read what the others read—or they don't read at all. Many don't. A large proportion of them fell behind in the first place at least partly because the regular reading material was too difficult or failed to challenge their attention.

Special material is needed to catch and hold their interest.

A small start has been made in producing a remedial program that is geared to the child's age level, reading ability and general interests. The New York City

<sup>\*</sup>Prepared especially for *The Elementary English Review* at the request of the Editor, through the co-operation of Mr. Allan Sherman, Chief, Periodicals Section, Work Projects Administration.

<sup>1</sup>See *The Elementary English Review*, April 1940.

Board of Education has experimented with this type of program since the early '20's. Having made a start in this direction, this board early availed itself of the assistance of the Work Projects Administration in broadening the scope of its experimentation. A WPA educational project was set up in New York with the city Board of Education as the sponsor. This project might be termed an experimental reading laboratory. There the theories of progressive educators have been put to the test in a new type of reading program for the elementary grades. It has been tried out as a remedial program for slow readers. Many agree with Dr. Gates that the results indicate that a similar program might well be tried out throughout our school system.

Dr. Gates cites this project in his discussion as an example of the type of reading program that he believes will entertain as well as inform. And that is its aim. That, and the ultimate development of a taste for good literature. No one wishes to see the classics displaced, nor to minimize their merits. In advocating a revision of our elementary reading program, the sponsors wish only to insure the laying of a firm foundation in taste and habits, to prepare the young mind for a gradual build-up to the more difficult and enduring classics.

The type of material being tried out with WPA aid on the proving ground of New York's public schools is a more proper preliminary, many believe, to the cultivation of good literary tastes, than is most of the material that is in common use today.

It was on the basis of this theory that the New York City Board of Education availed itself of the aid of the Work Projects Administration in setting up this emergency education project designed particularly to develop remedial material

for slow readers—and to provide special instruction for them at the same time. It was designed also to serve as a demonstration of the results over a period of months or years of providing a more palatable reading diet for general consumption of elementary students.

The education program of the WPA—because of its character as an emergency relief employment program—cannot, of course, assume any of the regular duties of local teaching staffs. That is why most of the WPA educational activities are in the field of nursery school and adult education. This experiment was made possible by the fact that on New York City relief rolls there is an unusually large reservoir of professional and technical workers trained in the fields of education, journalism, art and research.

The local Board of Education furnished generous sponsor's contributions and ample supervisory assistance. The material used has been selected and written under the guidance of a specialist in the field of children's reading. The WPA teachers assigned to the project have, with her guidance, directed the planning of this material—a series of booklets, about a hundred in all. They also teach the classes where regular teachers have not been provided for this specialized service. The booklets contain simple tales of fiction, history, adventure, humor and animal life, that will appeal as well as instruct. The stories scaled to varying age-levels, I.Q.'s, and to vocabulary limitations are prepared by WPA writers and illustrated by WPA artists. They are printed at small expense (from the sponsor's fund) in paper-back booklet form. Large black type is used. Some of the illustrations are pen and ink drawings, some are crayon sketches, others are water colors or wood cuts.

Studies made by research workers on

co-operating projects, guide the authors and teachers in scaling the stories to the age-levels and other limitations of the readers. Plot complexity is carefully measured to see that no story is beyond the comprehension of the readers for which it is intended.

These limitations imposed upon the authors have by no means robbed the stories of charm or imagination. With a few exceptions, they have been written with extraordinary ingenuity in telling a convincing tale, with an ideal incidentally involved. All of the stories used in the course are selected primarily for their literary value. Many of them, like the tales of A. A. Milne, have fascination even for the adult mind because of a quality of philosophic humor or fantasy. Bearing these hallmarks are *The Little Brown Duck*, (inspiring a hopeful outlook in the face of handicaps); *Hound Pup* (adolescent psychology); *The Barber and the King* (tolerance); *Mrs. Spider and Her Babies* (animal life); *Stories of Old New York* (one of the "Know-Your-City" series); and *Across Africa* (travel series). Others admittedly could be improved from the standpoint of originality and literary language. A few have missed the basic aim entirely. These eventually will be weeded out and only the best retained.

The success of the program depends not so much on the development of specific materials as upon the establishment of proof that the theory behind it is sound. When more than 3,000 boys and girls during a single school term are returned to their own classes after such remedial reading work—boys and girls who had never been able to keep up under the regular reading program—there is a basis for believing in the theory.

The children referred to the WPA remedial course by their principals and

teachers come from all I.Q. gradations from naturally slow students with I.Q.'s of 75 or up, to many with ratings running well above the average or normal mark of 100.

Those falling too far below the 75 are automatically assigned to regular Board of Education classes for retarded pupils.

The reading tests given upon admission to the WPA remedial groups are the New Stanford and WPA project reading tests, standardized for the Board of Education syllabus. Progress in remedial reading is subsequently measured against this test.

The success of the project in developing reading tastes—and in indicating the possible direction of needed reforms—can be determined from the following report of the unexpected speed with which a majority of the 3,000 pupils (studied during the 1938-1939 school year) regained lost ground during stated periods of instruction. This report is based upon the studies of WPA research workers:<sup>2</sup>

According to current academic concepts, the child with an I.Q. of 85 to 100 is expected to gain in routine classroom instruction a satisfactory completion of the curriculum as set out by the syllabus for the actual time spent under instruction. An average child spending 175 days at school—the average length of a school year—should have a normal gain of 175 days or one school year of 8.75 months. Children of average I.Q.'s are expected to make 8.75 months gain for every year in the classroom.

A group of 2,193 pupils in the remedial reading project, comprising all I.Q. grades from well below average to well over average intelligence reactions, who received an average of 3.7 months or 73.7 days of

<sup>2</sup> Report from Public Information Section, New York City Work Projects Administration, August 31, 1939.

remedial instruction, were found to have made an average gain of 12.5 months of instruction. The normal expected gain for these pupils would be 3.7 months while the actual gains were 3.6 times the normal expected gain. The gains made according to the various I.Q. grades can be seen in Table A.

TABLE A  
AVERAGE GAINS IN READING UNDER  
REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION

I.Q. Groups	No. of Cases	Aver. Days		Aver. Gains (in months)
		Remedial Instruction	Mos.	
Below 75	59	64.6	3.2	9.8
75-84	404	75.5	3.8	12.5
85-99	1096	75.4	3.8	12.8
100-109	480	71.8	3.6	12.6
110 plus	154	66.4	3.3	12.5
All groups	2193	73.7	3.7	12.5

In all cases the gains have equalized the mental growth of the children, permitting them to return to classes of children of their own age in instances of retarded development or to focus attention along lines previously disliked and avoided in the cases of brighter students. A new outlook on life often is the result of the work this WPA project is doing in association with the Board of Education.

The Work Projects Administration has little opportunity to expand this program of remedial reading because work of this type is recognized as a function of the public schools and the WPA consist-

ently maintains the policy of avoiding any duplication of public school services. The project in New York City was established and operated on an experimental basis only. It is to be hoped that it has aided in demonstrating the value of a remedial reading program. The extent to which such programs will be provided throughout the country depends upon local Boards of Education and school administrators who realize its value, and parents who wish such services for their children.

The material developed in the WPA experimental laboratory and used on this one proving ground could be made available for general use through two channels. It could be published at cost of production as are all government periodicals, upon request of school boards; or it could be published commercially, as the state and local guides prepared by the Writers' Project have been published, and sold through regular channels to the schools.

Those who have worked closely with the program sincerely hope that some means will be found of putting this material to a broad use for the benefit of millions rather than thousands of elementary school children.



# Mythology--When?

ELIZABETH H. COOLIDGE

*Cleveland Heights, Ohio*

Hence, loathed Melancholy,  
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born  
In Stygian cave forlorn  
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and  
sights unholy!

IT WAS MY first year of teaching, and I was far more enthusiastic than practical. I had high hopes about Love of Literature, but when I read those lines to the senior English class in the small town high school, I faced a room full of the blankest faces I have ever seen. The class was ordinarily so very responsive (they were bright youngsters, too) that I knew it was I who was erring. I stopped, made inquiries, and discovered that, with the exception of the few who had stuck to Latin beyond Caesar, their chief acquaintance with mythological terms was limited to Cupid on Valentines. We thereupon took three days off, and, aided and abetted by the four bright souls from the Virgil class, we memorized myths. It was not an ideal procedure—emergency measures seldom are—and I probably learned more about teaching than the pupils did about gods and goddesses, but ever since then I have been inordinately conscious of the problem of teaching mythology.

This is no place to enter upon an argument for the necessity of some knowledge of mythology in order to enhance one's enjoyment of literature or to enlarge the scope of one's reading. I take it for granted that you believe that life is not wholly a Problem in Civics, and that the Arts are a vital nourishing element. However, in my wonderings about this particular phase of subject matter, I have reached several convictions and one

scheme; it is upon them that I shall dwell.

In the first place, teaching mythology is the business of the public schools, as many of them recognize. It would be most convenient to crowded class periods and packed curricula if school teachers could rely on these bits of local color being added, along with information on batting averages and the lives of motion picture actors, outside of school hours. Convenience, though, can hardly be expected.

Secondly, "courses" designed to convey this body of knowledge are not the way to handle the situation. Day after day sessions, enforced, with Gayley's *Classic Myths* or a modern equivalent are a pretty deadly procedure. The process of learning these stories should be rather a gay one, with no outer evidence of compulsion such as that to which I subjected my poor high school seniors. It should have the appearance, at least, of being a privilege and a recreation, a bypath of educational primroses away from the International Situation and the intricacies of algebra.

Nor can myths be effectively taught through the medium of other literature. A ninth grade boy I know is assiduously collecting "ads" using figures and symbols connected with Greek mythology. He is to make a notebook of them, and the project is obviously devised for the purpose of pepping up his English class reading of the *Odyssey*. Bobby has been brought up on myths, and the great amount of time devoted to pure mechanics in English class bores him to

mischievous-making. The girl across the street who is in the same class and to whom this is all a new field is lost half the time. The net result, of course, is that both the pupils loathe a great piece of literature—and as you well know, loathing so born is both lasting and expansive.

Furthermore, this information, or an introduction to it, should be acquired early in one's school days, before the pseudo-sophistication of adolescence can dismiss it with a more or less polite grimace. Not only are the stories there longer, to color one's literary and artistic appreciation; not only does the knowledge of them increase with their use and with the many allusions to them that even the most casual child should find in his school reading; but early childhood accepts them with a grace and lively interest and an impressive imagery of its own that we may find lacking if these stories first strike the minds at high school age.

I have another conviction, a general one which here I make particular. I believe that adults "talk down" to children far more than is necessary, and that school teachers, in their anxiety to have every child understand their explanations, acquire a habit of doing so just as much as do those who are untrained. I can't speak for arithmetic and spelling, for I know nothing about methods in those subjects; where I have most noticed the tendency in my frequent visits to the lower grades during the past few years is in music and literature. There may be great educational value in learning "songs" about spinach and "poems" about grasshoppers, but to dignify the ditties by the title of "song" and "poem" is a hazardous concession. The children are enraptured with Robert Louis Stevenson and with Christina Rossetti when they

read their poems in Grade 2-B. Is it necessary to give them cheaper fare? The teachers often read stories to the children in these lower grades; must they always stick to over-wrought fantasy or to tales of woolly brown bears?

In June of 1937 my son finished the first grade, and I decided both to follow my convictions and to try them out in my private experimental station. Joe could read well enough to accomplish simple things for himself, and what I read to him must therefore be something not too old for him in content, but something too old for him in wording. So I announced a regular reading time from 7:00 to 7:30, and suggested that he invite his friends. The first night there were three extra children, the next night there were eight in all, and they appeared each evening with the most astonishing regularity for the next six weeks, at the end of which time I went out of town. Early the following spring they began to beg me to "have the Reading Hour again this summer, *please*," and although I was unable to meet them regularly, the neighborhood rang with whoops of joy whenever I announced a free evening. Wouldn't you like to know what it was that I read to them, what it was that drew forth all this eagerness? *Tanglewood Tales* and *The Wonder Book* of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

These children are neither ill-fed and ill-clad, nor are they at the other extreme of the financially privileged—they are members of the great middle class. There are four boys and four girls, ranging in age (I speak of the first summer) from six to eleven years. Two of them, a boy and a girl of eight, are, I should say, rather on the stupid side if we consider I.Q. standards, and their home atmosphere and training are hardly of the highest. The three other girls come from

families who give them exceptionally high educational and cultural advantages. Yet it was the intellectually dull girl who was most insistent on my resuming operations this year; it was she who informed a birthday party last May that she just kept thinking about Theseus' forgetting to hoist rainbow colored sails on his return after killing the Minotaur. I wish Mr. Hawthorne might have heard the animated discussion that followed spontaneously. Practically, however, perhaps I had better wish that school authorities might have heard it.

Oh, I tried out other versions of mythological tales. I wanted to be fair, and I wanted to know. After the first session, when the children aired their previous bits of information, I tried *The Book of Knowledge* and the stories of Josephine Preston Peabody, both of which I happened to possess. I tried them at intervals later on, especially when I wanted to hurry over some information, but they simply did not "catch." They were to the children as *Harper's Dictionary of Classical Antiquities* is to you and me, reference purely, interesting enough, but not engaging. And reference is more memorable when it is a bypath in a story, a desired thing, than when it is just so much material that is to be remembered. Perhaps there are other versions equal in attractiveness to those of Mr. Hawthorne. These often move slowly to our adult ears despite our delight in their artistry of construction, but children have no care for economy of words. If Hercules dallies with the maidens for four pages before he starts out to find the Old Man of the Sea, they enjoy the dalliance. If Bellerephon waits interminably for a first glimpse of Pegasus, they are trusting, and know the waiting is worth while. And if Jason has many troubles before he gets to the land of the Golden Fleece,—

well, it's all exciting, isn't it? Of course I had to substitute words here and there because of the younger children—there were times when we just couldn't stop the action to go into vocabulary matters, and there were times when the right word, the one that tickled my fancy, need not be within their ken—but more often than we might suspect the children take new words in their stride, just as we do, and give them intelligibility from their context.

The actual management of an evening's session never involved any complicated procedure. It was just ordinary school room technique. The first two evenings we spent a large amount of time gathering and attempting to integrate the miscellaneous bits of information the children already possessed. My very first question was enough to start the youngsters off. I remembered my English class and asked, quite meekly, "Do any of you know anything about a child called Cupid?"

The children readily comprehended the idea of the inhabitants of Mount Olympus and of the kingdom of Pluto, and of course I produced pictures whenever I could, and encouraged them to do likewise. Incidentally, we used Hawthorne's nomenclature with occasional mention of the Greek equivalents to his Anglicized Latin names in order to familiarize the children with the other terms. The only exception here was Hawthorne's "Quicksilver," whom I thought it wiser to call by the more common name of Mercury.

After these preliminary sessions there was little for me to do. We had the traditional sugar-coated review at the beginning of each evening. The "Let me see, where were we?" method is of course the simplest; the re-telling by the children of last night's story, particularly when

one of their number has been absent, is always a good fixative; preparing for a new tale by naming characters in it whom we have met before and then scanning our previous information is likewise a natural procedure. Mercury is so prominent a personage in so many of the tales that after the first week I have never given out notice of his possible appearance. The mere mention of a light-footed stranger or a queer cap is enough to start anticipatory giggles and nudgings, for Hawthorne was remarkably skilled in child psychology.

Some stories require a forthright explanation before they are entered upon. *The Pomegranate Seeds*, for example with its introduction of Ceres, involves a touch of nature study and cycle-of-the-seasons discussions. (It is unnecessarily distracting to stop the rhythm of the actual tale for lengthy questions or explanations.) Following that, it affords too open an opportunity for mention of Latin derivatives for any kind of teacher to pass by. *Circe's Palace* requires some accounting for Ulysses, some statement about Homer (although I see no necessity for differentiating this from the other tales), together with a few highlights on the Trojan War. But you who are teachers understand this general preparatory procedure.

I believe, however, that caution should be used. These are stories to be enjoyed, not lessons to be learned, and except for explanations necessary to understanding—which explanations must come out lightly—we have to keep the fairy-tale atmosphere. Hawthorne does so, if we but heed him.

Of course, too, the reading has to be done rather dramatically. An occasional touch even of the theatrical does not harm things for children so much as does dull and monotonous or unenthusiastic dron-

ing. There is a great deal of suspense in these versions of the myths, and it would be well-nigh impossible *not* to stop breathing now and then. There are frequent hints, too—I have already mentioned those suggestive of Mercury's identity—which are fun to stress.

You must know, by now, just what bearing I believe all this has on the practical outlook of the schoolroom despite the part that a social atmosphere played in my group. Even a nodding acquaintance with mythology cannot be gained haphazardly; at least, we certainly can not count on its being so gained. It must be a pleasurable exercise, and it should be started when the mind is very young and very open. Teachers read to young children in school anyway, and young children enjoy hearing and talking about ancient myths and the tales based on them. Children can understand and feel in stories read to them much that they cannot read for themselves, although outside reading based on what the teacher has given is much to be desired.

I am not at all sure that Hawthorne is the *unum necessarium* for the teachers to choose as material; I suggest him because I found him effective. I do think there is still field for further re-writings of the old stories in forms that children will want to read for themselves, supplementing what an enthusiastic teacher merely suggests in class, and of course even Hawthorne did not cover the whole mythology.

Even so, the impetus is best given by teachers reading well-written tales to children in the first few grades. I believe it would not be difficult to work out integrated programs adapted in manner and content to the school and to the teacher. And if the Professor of Education who told me that he sees the day coming when public schools realize that all the



# A Heidi Project For The Seventh Grade

CALVIN T. RYAN

*State Teachers College and Laboratory Schools*

*Kearney, Nebraska*

SINCE HEIDI is probably as well loved as any character in all juvenile fiction, and since her story is clean and worthy of emulation in principle at least this book makes an interesting project in classes where much has to be accomplished in limited time and space, and with limited materials. The story has been filmed and shown in almost every community; therefore it can be handled with even greater facility. There is chance for comparison and contrast; a chance for driving home the part which speech plays in reading and speaking.

Obviously, the first step is to make sure that every member of the class knows the story, preferably from the book, for in the motion picture many interesting parts of the story were deleted. It may be that some of those parts will be the ones which will appeal to the more original members of the class.

Some time, certainly two or three recitations, should be devoted to conversations about the story. If the class have seen the movie, then they can make comparisons. They can discuss why certain parts were used, and others omitted. Perhaps they will agree that the cutting was not so wisely done as it might have been, or as they would have done it.

Parts for dramatization should be selected, but in the selection the students should take the lead. It is to be their "show." The teacher should be there to remind them of physical limitations, of what it will mean to get costumes, to

create a suggestive setting, and the like. The matter of time enters in. Shall the dramatization be only for the class? Or for the whole school? Or shall we be ambitious and make it a public performance?

Whatever the decision, the teacher should remember that the purpose of the dramatization should not be merely to put on a "performance." It should be rather to give the pupils a chance to create values, to form an attitude toward the characters involved. The aim of education is to develop the whole child. This development must include his ideas, his attitudes, and his behavior. "Drama" is one thing, and "dramatization," as we are using it in the grades, is something else. The histrionic arts have their place, but in a study of a story like *Heidi* they play but little part.

There is, perhaps, no one best way to dramatize *Heidi*. The way I did it may not appeal to you and your group. If we are to permit the children truly free and creative play, then we must not expect them always to do the thing in the same way. Children like experimenting. Even at twelve they have a tendency to retain their child-like habit of seeing resemblances, whereas the adult sees differences.

Naturally, no study of the story would be complete without following as many of the leads as time permits. Certainly, we shall want to know something of the geography of the country immortalized in

the story. That will include the weather, the main occupations of the people, how they dress, etc.

Then there are the games which Heidi and Goat Peter must have played, the songs which they must have sung, the folk-dances they must have danced or seen danced.

The possibilities of finding too many inviting leads is the temptation, for after all, the children must be given literary experiences elsewhere.

I thought of building a house, a "Heidi House," for through that project we could learn many intimacies of home life not found in other ways. So with some cardboard boxes and glue, we set to work. After the house was built, of course we wanted to furnish it. For our selection we relied closely upon what we had seen in the movies. Naturally, also, after we had furnished the house, we wanted some characters. Here we relied upon the dime-store and our pooled experiences from both the book and the movie. In the end, we had the Alms Uncle, Heidi, Goat Peter, and Swanli and Bearli. The outlay for materials was forty cents. The fun could not be measured in money.

Obviously the children were sent more than once to reread the story to find out this point or that. We knew that story vividly by the time we had finished.

We have found that motor learning is more powerful than verbal learning. We have found that a child who impersonates some character in a story is influenced in his own personality. Children soon sense that there is a right way to read or give a line in a play, that speech reveals character. "Mary, just how did Heidi say that speech?" "John, how do you think Goat Peter looked and acted when he said that speech?" Then Mary senses the character-revealing power of voice. Then John senses what it means to put himself in another's place.

We felt that the class had lived through a literary experience. They had not been vaccinated against having one. All teachers, I assume, sense the difference between instruction and education. Likewise, all of us know that usually the two accompany each other. We had to instruct the class up to a certain point before the children were ready to get the educative values.

While no amount of dramatization, or scenery building should take the place of literary appreciation, or serve in lieu of actual study of the story, whenever those activities can be used as adjuncts to teaching and aids to learning, as ways for vitalizing the story, then, it seems to me, we can justify the activity.

# The Arthurian Legends

## Editions Suitable For School Use\*

MAY Z. DALRYMPLE

Junior High School

Darien, Connecticut

**H**ISTORIANS cannot agree on the historical details of the real King Arthur and who can blame them when the first accounts were brought to Brittany from Wales by Britons fleeing before the Roman invasion, and then brought back to England again when soldiers from Brittany joined forces with the Normans to help drive out the Saxons!

As the Norman power grew and spread through all the land, so did the tales told of Arthur and his knights grow and spread, with additions and improvements, as time went on.

In the reign of Henry I, a monk called Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote his British History in Latin. His chief hero was Arthur, and from this time Arthur became the great hero of romance.

About two hundred years later, Sir Thomas Malory collected and translated the tales into English under the title of *Morte d'Arthur*. This is one of the first books printed by William Caxton.

Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* has become a store house, a treasure-book to which other writers have gone, and from which they have taken stories and woven them afresh, and given them new life.

It remained for the poet, Alfred Lord Tennyson, to renew the popularity of the King Arthur Legends, some four hundred years later, by immortalizing this same king in his *Idylls of the King*.

The chief objective of all, whether teachers, parents, or librarians, is to provide our boys and girls with the best of

everything that is available. That applies to literature especially, in the case of the teachers of English and librarians. Therefore, when attempting to introduce a child to such a treasure chest of spiritual beauty, high ideals, and romance, as the Arthurian legends, it is important to know which versions are most suitable for his age, and which ones, although necessarily abridged, still retain the best features of the original.

For this version, if it meets with the approval of the child, will serve as an introduction to one of the greatest masterpieces of medieval literature, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, and may excite in him a desire to know it fully and directly. Such a knowledge will prove a lasting pleasure and benefit, for it will later increase his enjoyment of more modern versions, such as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, or of stories in which there are allusions to the ancient tales, such as Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, or T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*.

Thanks to the careful study and painstaking work of various interested persons, we have a number of excellent editions of this cycle of stories to offer to our young people, editions which retain not only the most popular of the stories, but which also reflect the spirit of the age, and which approximate the colorful, romantic literary style which distinguishes the original.

\*Prepared under the direction of Miss Florence Tredick in connection with a course offered at the Albany Library School, Albany, New York.

The great number of editions available tends to bewilder anyone desiring to choose the best version for a particular child. Therefore, the three most popular versions for three distinctly different age levels are listed first. The others follow in the order of preference. The books were judged on the basis of (1) the suitability of the selection of stories; (2) the treatment and accuracy, as to detail, in the stories selected, and (3) whether or not the literary style was worthy of the original. The general format and attractiveness of each book were also taken into consideration. Many of the editions in the second group were singled out for discussion primarily because they differed from other versions in style, point of view, or author's treatment of the stories.

#### EDITIONS

##### *First Choice for Three Different Age Levels*

Pyle, Howard. Pyle's Brandywine edition. 4 volumes. Scribner, 1933. \$3.00.

Each volume contains a frontispiece in color and a note, the work of a former Pyle pupil. Pen decorations are by Robert Ball.

Titles: V. 1—*The Story of King Arthur and His Knights*. V. 2—*The Story of the Champions of the Round Table*. V. 3—*The Story of Sir Launcelot and His Companions*. V. 4—*The Story of the Grail and the Passing of Arthur*.

The stories in this series are beautifully told in a colorful and romantic style. However, on account of the length and detail of many of the stories, it is definitely for older children. In general the stories do not follow Malory as closely as some other editions, but they are as authentic, and lack none of the vigor and action of the original. The drawings are in keep-

ing with the spirit of the story, and the general make-up of the entire series is of high quality. Add to all this the excellence and charm of Pyle's own unique literary style, and we have here, in my opinion, the finest edition of the Arthurian legends for the boy or girl of the upper grades.

Macleod, Mary. *Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*: Stories from Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Illustrations by A. G. Walker. (Fine Art Juveniles). Stokes. 1906. \$3.00.

This is an unusually good version for the middle grades (five to eight) particularly, for while keeping closely to Malory in subject matter and in spirit, it is more simply told than the others. The arrangement of the material into stories, or groups of closely related stories, makes it equally suitable for story telling or for reading aloud.

The seventy-three drawings are historically accurate, and have the perfection and beauty of line commonly associated with sculpture. The attractiveness of the book is increased by the use of a variety of carefully chosen lettering, to indicate major and minor divisions in the story. It is well bound, and the paper is of a good quality.

Lansing, Marion Florence. *Page, Esquire and Knight*: A Book of Chivalry. Illustrated by Charles Copeland. Ginn. 1910. 60c.

The best stories of chivalry are presented here in simple story forms. The style is good, and the pictures are such as would appeal to children of the fifth and sixth grades. The print, on a good grade of paper, is clear, and the pages are well spaced. All in all, this little book is an excellent introduction to the King Arthur stories for small children.



*Other Editions*

Lanier, Sidney. ed. *The Boys' King Arthur: Sir Thomas Malory's History of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*, Edited for Boys. Illustrated by N. C. Wyeth. Scribner. 1937. \$1.50.

This edition, a favorite collection with boys, keeps very close to the original. The spelling has been modernized, and some minor passages and introductory matter have been omitted. All the greater tales, those of Arthur, Launcelot, Tristram, Gareth, Galahad, Percival, and the Holy Grail, have been retained. The general make-up of the book is good. The nine colored illustrations by N. C. Wyeth add much to its attractiveness.

Pollard, A. W. *The Romance of King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*; abridged from Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. Illustrated by Arthur Rackham. Macmillan. 1917, 1921.

The compiler considers his subjects as men and women of real flesh and blood, no two of them alike, and has changed the sequence of the stories to bring this out. To use Pollard's own words, he "has tried to clear away some of the underwoods, that the great trees may be better seen, and though I know that I have cleared away some small timber that is fine stuff in itself, if the great trees stand out the better, the experiment may be forgiven." It is indeed a series of character studies which appeal more to the adult mind; yet so much of the main structure of the stories is retained that young adolescents do read and enjoy it. The book is well planned and put together. The illustrations, while not numerous, are well drawn with the fine attention to detail that is characteristic of Arthur Rackham.

Greene, Frances Nimmo. *Legends of King Arthur and His Court*. Illus-

trated with original drawings by Edmund H. Garrett. Ginn. 1901, 1929. 75c.

I found this edition especially interesting because the author has followed Tennyson's version of the legends. The stories seem to be imbued with a certain spirit of ideal knightliness and poetic nobility not to be found in earlier versions. At the same time the style is natural and unaffected, and the language so simple that the book can be read and enjoyed long before any reading of the *Idylls of the King* could be attempted. The lettering, choice of type, and quality of paper are good, and the illustrations are well drawn and appropriate.

Sterling, Mary Blackwell. *The Story of Sir Galahad*; retold from *Le Morte d'Arthur* of Sir Thomas Malory and the original stories. Illustrated by William Ernest Chapman. Dutton. 1908. 223p. \$1.50.

The stirring action of knightly deeds, and a healthy human interest, combine with the religious theme to make this a beautiful narrative. Of all the Arthurian tales this one typifies best the quest for an ideal.

The print is large and clear, and so suitable for younger children. The illustrations, which resemble the paintings of an earlier period, are not likely to appeal greatly to children, however.

This version has been included here as an example of the completeness, in itself, of a tale, when it is separated from the whole.

Lang, Andrew. *Tale of the Round Table*. Illustrations by H. J. Ford. Longmans. 1907. \$1.25.

This would appeal to those who like fairy tales. It is not an important addition to the Arthurian literature now available. The conversations are weak,

lacking much of the vigor and color of the original. The illustrations, too, reflect the fairy tale quality of the stories. The general make-up of the book is inferior to that of the editions previously reviewed.

Frost, William Henry. *The Knights of the Round Table: Stories of King Arthur and the Holy Grail*. Illustrated by Sidney Richmond Burleigh. Scribner. 1927. \$1.50.

The language is rather commonplace and the teller talks down to the reader. So much time is spent on trivial details that the stories lag and become tiresome. The few illustrations are, on the whole, inappropriate and poorly executed. While the book is fairly well bound, the paper is rough, and of an inferior grade. The stories do not follow any particular sequence, but are grouped about localities, and are told, by a not too skillful story teller, as the places are visited by a party of three on a journey through England. The plan of the book seems to do much to lessen the effectiveness of even the most powerful of the old tales. Even as a travel book, it leaves much to be desired.

Warren, Maude Radford. *King Arthur and His Knights*. Illustrated by Walter F. Inwright. Rand McNally. 1905. 272p.

The format is the best feature of this little book. The print is large and clear, the pages well spaced, and the whole is neatly bound. The illustrations, while fair, are not as good as those found in some other editions.

This version does not compare with

any of those previously reviewed, in style, treatment of stories, nor story content. Too great a proportion of the book is given over to conversation—for the most part, banalities not in keeping with the circumstances, nor with the characters making the utterances. Then, too, the inaccuracies in episodes and events of even the best known of the old tales is such that a child could not fail to notice the discrepancies on reading other versions.

In my opinion, this is not an introduction worthy of the original tales, for it defeats the purpose for which easier editions are written. First, lacking the very qualities which in the old tales have appealed to children and stirred their imaginations for generations, this version is not likely to lead to further reading on the subject; second, if the child does go on to read another version, he is certain to experience a feeling of bewilderment, if not disgust.

#### SOURCES CONSULTED

Bulfinch, Thomas. *Age of Chivalry; King Arthur and his Knights*. Edited by Rev. J. Loughran Scott. McKay. 1900. \$1.50.

McFee, Inez N. *The Story of the Idylls of the King*. Adapted from Tennyson, with the original poem. Illustrated by M. L. Kirk. Stokes. 1912. \$2.00.

Marshall, H. E. "Early History of the Arthurian Legends." (In his *English Literature for Boys and Girls*). Stokes. \$3.75. (pp. 27-53).

Rawlinson, Eleanor. "King Arthur." (In her *Introduction to Literature for Children*). Norton. 1931. (pp. 163-179).

# Florence Crannell Means

WILHELMINA M. CROSSON

*Cushman School, Hancock District*

*Boston, Massachusetts*

ONE MAY afternoon a child came with a note from our North End Librarian saying, "I am sending you a book that has just been added to our shelves, *Shuttered Windows*. I think it is a superlative example of Negro life, and I am sure you will be struck with its sincerity. The illustrations enhance the book, and the story of Moses, no doubt, will affect you with the same poignancy as it did Harriet Freeman."

That evening I did not put the book down until I had finished it. The completion brought to me the conviction that here indeed is a courageous writer who is working toward a better type of literature about my race. She has given careful study to the problem, and has handled the story with such grace as to make it most absorbing, not only to young Negro girls, but to all girls.

The next day found me at the library looking up the life of Florence Crannell Means, and discovering other books which she had written. After reading them, I have a feeling that she is writing to bridge the gap between the harmless and the sophisticated, weaving love stories into her books for girls, a thing which any experienced reader knows requires adroit handling if insipidity is to be avoided. She does it superbly.

I am sure she believes that the all-inclusive friendship of the world of books admits no geographical or racial barriers, and she knows that this is particularly true in the scope of children's affections. Thus she has taken as her entering wedge the lives of girls in the western part of our country. She has

written three stories of their daring and cleverness, emphasizing the flavor of those early days of the West. She has written, also, a heart-stirring book on Indian Reservation life; another about an overgrown orphan of this depression; one of a yellow-skinned family; a serial story about the lively, humorous life on a California campus; and an unusually sympathetic treatment of Negro life. Each is full of sheer loveliness. They are perfect examples of vitality and of style. Their colorful descriptions will be fully appreciated, not only by the adolescent girl, but by older readers as well. Her beauty of style and incomparable English make her writings American literary gems, and her sympathies are so keen in dealing with races within our borders that they bring us joy.

Florence Crannell Means was born in Baldwinsville, New York, in a white parsonage shaded by stately elms. Her childhood was spent under her father's study-table or on his knee, as he made blot-pictures or wrote gay rhymes for her. Her home life was simple, quiet, delightful and stimulating.

Being omniverous readers, the entire family would forego many worldly goods in order to possess books. Her summers were spent in Minnesota at her grandfather's home and here she was influenced in her childhood and adolescence by the great pioneer West. In her stories in which Janey Grant is the heroine, you will find a description of her grandparents.

Her marriage to Carl Means, a lawyer and a lover of literature, has been most ideal for he has given her time to write

and she says he would rather have for dessert "a story in place of a pie." Then through her only child, Eleanor, she has come to know the adolescent, for she says that Eleanor's friends are always in their home. Thus she has found the inspiration for writings about the adolescent.

Mrs. Means has a thorough knowledge of the Hopi and Navajo Indians, for she spends several weeks among them each year and has acquired not only a Hopi name, "Tawahonsi," but a Hopi name-sake as well. She knows the peoples of the plains and the mountains, the Mexicans and Asiatics, and states that although she has not visited China, she has an adopted daughter in Shanghai. Her sympathetic treatment of the story of Gentlemen's Island definitely shows that she knows the Negro of that section. Her stories give us regional understanding. Yet their finely sensitive details carry them beyond boundaries to a universal meaning and the pull on our emotions makes us realize the great influence which such books should have upon character development of youth. Certainly, she can project her spirit into a far time and a far scene and live there so fully and understandingly that time and space yield secrets to her.

Her trilogy *A Candle in the Mist*, *Ranch and Ring*, and *A Bowlful of Stars*, are all tinged with mystery. In the first, the loss of four thousand dollars forces the family of Janey Grant to move to Minnesota in 1871. The mysterious disappearance of a sawdust doll and her return solves the mystery of the missing money, but only after the family has suffered irreparable losses in crops and cattle. The story continues in *Ranch and Ring*, for the family moves still further West to Colorado. We get to know and love the characters which have been met in the previous book. The loss of an old

ring brings again an air of mystery into the story. The romance in this book between Janey and Haakon Haakonson will prove fascinating to older girls. *A Bowlful of Stars* carries on the story of Janey Grant. We meet her on July 4, 1876, when Colorado is celebrating its statehood. Janey with her friend, Susan, learn their futures from a soothsayer. Then a series of episodes follows which seems to bear out their fortunes, and Janey spends her money for a gold claim. After Sandy and Susan marry and go to take up their claim, Janey goes with them to see hers, also; but she is glad after the excitement dies down to return home to Haakon Haakonson.

The culture and history of the country, its heritage, its picturesqueness, are all found in these three books. One feels in them a lifetime of struggle—a trilogy on frontier life with its dangers, whose characters are real people who have a true feeling for the region and love for one another.

*Dusky Day* and *The Singing Wood* are stories of college life. The heroine of the story is called Dusky Day but her real name is Loduska. She is attending a co-educational college with her brother in California. Since her grandfather left all his estate to a maiden aunt, her artist father and writer mother and their children are always on the edge of poverty. Yet the brother and sister have pluck and courage to try to make their way through college in the time of the depression. Aunt Phronsie helps in a unique way. It is a story of sunshine and laughter. Boys and girls college-bound will be interested in knowing freshman difficulties of school and finances. A touch of mystery in this book is not solved until the very end.

*The Singing Wood* carries us to the senior year of Dusky Day. An orange grove sold under a very informal agree-



ment is Exhibit A. Here we get Dusky's courage and her ingenuity in making life worth living. New and startling changes come and with spirit and strength Dusky Day overcomes them. Her international mind makes her see the Chinese and Japanese problem, also the barrier which keeps the lone Negro girl in the University from being a part of the campus life. They are all brought together during senior week in a great international pageant. The author has the power to present these experiences so that we, too, may know the joys and tragedies of college life. These are truly distinctive books and most entertaining. The black and white illustrations are charming.

The next five books by Mrs. Means are single volumes.

It was Robert Louis Stevenson who wrote,

Little Turk or Japanese

Oh don't you wish that you were me?

Here we find a little child who is quite secure in his national feeling, but in *Rainbow Bridge*, Mrs. Means realizes that if there is to be friendship between children of races and nations, it cannot be achieved by the use of the above couplet. It can only be realized through the children of the world living and laughing together. So she has brought a brilliant American-Japanese doctor and his lovable Japanese family to America to live for a while. The doctor comes to study a certain disease. His family learns much about the prejudice of American democracy. However, the "Rainbow Bridge" which arches from America to Japan binds hearts and hands and helps to keep the family happy. Thus when the doctor finds he has a chance to remain in the United States a little longer, he decides to ask his family how they feel about it. A vote is taken. Although the Japanese mother would like to return to the

Flowery Kingdom, she, like a true mother, realizes that it is best for father and the children and casts her vote along with all the others for "Rice Country," which means America. Charmingly written, there seems not a wasted word on any of the pages of this book. The illustrations are unique. Nothing could make a better springboard for a leap into friendships with other races than this story.

We know that to be fine for young people, a book must stimulate the reader to higher ideals. *Tangled Waters* is a story woven against a background of Navajo life. It is an appealing story picturing the bewilderment of a Navajo girl, Altolie, whose home is on the Navajo reservation in Arizona. She is the keeper of the flock. A fall from Bead Butte sends her to a government hospital, and to school. When she comes home, she resents and resists the prejudices of the old step-grandmother who tries to keep her from the Belliganeh, the white people. Altolie finally wins her point. The book is written with clarity, beauty, and a strength which shows that the author thoroughly and deeply realizes the significance of these people. This is a section of American history written with meticulous care, with authenticity and fairness, and graphic force.

Given well stocked bookshelves, the varied and compelling interests of young people will lead them far in their reading. Certainly a book such as *Adella Mary of Old Mexico*, giving in clear, simple language the history of our southwest country, will serve as a gateway to their American history.

It is a story of a timid little girl, Adella Mary Hoskins, who travels by wagon train in 1846 over the Santa Fe Trail with her family to visit her invalid mother. They are headed for Taos, New

Mexico. The Mexican war intervenes. Adella Mary has to take charge of the family when Mr. Hoskins dashes away on business. Shy Adella takes command like a general and proves that she is worthy to be counted among the pioneer women. Its geographical and historical facts make this book one to be put into the hands of boys and girls as supplementary reading for American history. From a sociological viewpoint, it indicates how difficult is the task of discovering what goes on within the boy or girl and how under acute circumstances, he or she will rise to the occasion.

*Penny for Luck* is a valiant treatment of home life in one of the ghost towns of Colorado. It is a lucky day for the orphan, Penny Adams, as she trudges along looking for a home for herself and her invalid dog, when people coming from Denver decide to give her a ride. A place is made for her in their home, even though they are in the throes of the depression. Notification of her whereabouts is sent to the orphanage. Penny enjoys some happy days. Convincing in the sincerity of characters, faithful to the background, this story describes, we feel, the warmth in the heart of this family for the overgrown orphan. Later, we feel that Penny through her thoughtfulness and loyalty earns the right to remain in the family.

*Shuttered Windows* is a delineation of life on Gentlemen's Island which is off the coast of South Carolina. Here we find Negro children, poor and uneducated. It was to this island that Harriet Freeman, a Negro girl, came when she lost her parents. Reared as she was in a cultured, well-to-do foster home in Minneapolis, and equipped with a three years' high school education, it is no wonder that she was surprised to find that Great-Grandmother could not read

or write, and that she was amazed at the island's stark poverty. Great-Grandmother tells her the story of "Moses Out of Arabia" and also about some of her own harrowing experiences. We are glad, however, that with the help of Ritchie, a Negro youth, training in agriculture in the island's school, she finally makes a great decision. Using "Moses" as her guiding star, Harriet faces the future with hope and faith, fully aware that the unlatching of those "Shuttered Windows" is in her hands.

We feel the young girl's struggle against ignorance, poverty, and tradition; and we come to admire and respect, as she did, her unlettered Grandmother who was so stalwart, so noble. We respect, too, the devotion of the teachers in trying to raise the crude standards of living on the island.

Mrs. Means has achieved a notable success in writing a story so stirring and inspiring. To say that the illustrations are lovely would not be enough. The illustrator, Armstrong Sperry, has caught the spirit of the book and has put into his drawings all the charm and character that his brush would yield. He is never led into the pit-falls of caricature. They are superb and most satisfying. As a Negro woman, I feel *Shuttered Windows* no mere "flash in the pan" of books for young people, but a highly significant contribution to American juvenile literature. How gratifying to find a white woman who through her great tolerance has been able to treat so objectively, so sanely, and with such sympathetic understanding the life of a Negro girl. When one finishes *Shuttered Windows*, one feels a piercing tenderness—an intimacy which causes one's enthusiasm to mount and to soar. *Shuttered Windows* takes one to the "top of silence" and leaves one vibrant with happiness.

# Editorial

## HOW CAN WE REGAIN OUR MOORINGS?

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the October number of *The Elementary English Review* appeared an editorial entitled "Moorings." One of our readers challenged us to present a bill of particulars. We threw the challenge back. The reply follows.

*Some of the ways in which we have lost our moorings*

1. By teaching the idealism of another day as if it were a practical program for action in our times.

2. By sneering at all ideals, and at all those in public life who give expression to them—not only politicians, but doctors, lawyers, preachers and teachers—thus discrediting their leadership.

3. By denying the existence of good and evil, or at least by refusing to distinguish between them; by failure to recognize that the least of several evils may be the only good available at a given time; by idealizing as a positive good an evil accepted under stress; by refusing to do anything at all because the ideal solution is impossible.

4. By using good words in obverse meanings, usually with sincerity, but sometimes with intent to deceive—"rationalization," "reality," "protective custody."

5. By calling members of the D.A.R. ancestor worshippers, and, intoxicated with our own smartness, refusing to read or to keep up the records in our own family Bibles.

6. By showing children how to make the worse appear the better cause, instead of conducting school debates as a search for truth or a fair and reasonable compromise.

7. By refusing to believe anything not discovered by the technique of prag-

m, or, on the other hand, by refusing to believe anything not having the sanction of the religious teachers of our own particular faith.

8. By trying to make Americans of the children of our foreign-born by cutting them off from the culture of the peoples from which they sprang.

\* \* \* \* \*

In short, by mounting a hundred wild horses and riding off in all directions at once.

*How can we regain our moorings?*

By returning to the simple faith we once had in human betterment, personal and social, through human effort, as expressed in Biblical literature and in the folk literature of all peoples; and (without abandoning the "high" literature which has made up the bulk of the English curriculum, even providing much subject-matter for spoken and written English) by adding to the school program some such things as the following:

1. The folk literature, arts, and crafts of the minor national and racial groups in our population. Much of this literature has not yet found its way into textbooks, but must be dug out of old books, or older persons, by the ablest pupils, and written up by them for the amusement and instruction of their classmates. This is a real advantage—not a disadvantage.

2. The autobiographies and biographies of labor leaders and of common men and women.

3. The historical setting of the "high" idealism in great literature, and how to create an equally "high" but different idealism for our times.

4. The "Declaration" and the "Constitution" as literature. As one boy put it, by understanding the Constitution as the "last will and testament" of the founding fathers.

5. Discussion and debate of current questions as a means of seeking truth or a fair and reasonable compromise.

6. As subject matter for oral and written English, autobiography, the biographies of members of the family, and sometimes of whole families,<sup>1</sup> with encouragement to pupils to give expression to the struggle which they have had to

<sup>1</sup>See "The Bell Always Rang," by Dorothy Mills Howard, in *The Elementary English Review*, November, 1940.

preserve the religion and ways of life which they hold dear. If we cannot teach religion in the public schools directly, we can in this indirect fashion encourage pupils to *revalue* and give expression to the religion they have.

But my five hundred words are more than up, and I have given expression to only a few of the ways in which we might regain our moorings. Any teacher might finish the list or strike out all I have said and make a better one. What is important is that all of us try to do just that.

—WILLIAM L. CONNOR  
Superintendent of Schools  
Allentown, Pennsylvania

#### MYTHOLOGY—WHEN?

(Continued from page 314)

English needed by the average student above Grade 10 can be absorbed through Social Studies—if he is half as influential as I fear he is, it is all the more necessary, from your point of view and from mine, to enter early on the enriching potentialities of mythology.

#### *By Way Of Postscript*

After some fifteen meetings of my

little group I read them, without comment, the first eighty lines of *L'Allegro*. Honor does not permit me to say that the youngsters loved it, or that it became even an upper bracket member of the poems I used as side lines because they were so scornful of poetry, but they certainly understood a great deal more than my high school seniors had done. Surely clarity is a big step toward appreciation.

#### FLORENCE CRANNELL MEANS

(Continued from page 324)

#### BOOKS BY MRS. MEANS, LISTED IN THE ORDER DISCUSSED

Candle in the Mist. Illus. by Marguerite De Angeli. Houghton Mifflin, 1931 (grades 6-8).

Ranch and Ring. Illus. by H. J. Peek. Houghton Mifflin, 1932 (grades 7-8).

Bowlful of Stars. Illus. by Henry Pitz. Houghton Mifflin, 1934 (grades 6-8).

Dusky Day. Illus. by M. De V. Lee. Houghton Mifflin, 1933 (grades 7-8).

The Singing Wood. Illus. by M. De V. Lee. Houghton Mifflin.

Rainbow Bridge. Illus. by Eleanor Frances Lattimore. Friendship Press.

Tangled Waters. Illus. by Herbert Morton Stoops. Houghton Mifflin.

Adella Mary in Old New Mexico. Illus. by Herbert Morton Stoops. Houghton Mifflin.

Penny for Luck. Illus. by Paul Quinn. Houghton Mifflin, 1935 (grades 5-8).

Shuttered Windows. Illus. by Armstrong Sperry. Houghton Mifflin, 1938 (grades 7-8).



# New Books For Boys And Girls

C. C. CERTAIN

## LOWER AND MIDDLE GRADES

**Elijah the Fishbite.** By Agnes Sligh Turnbull. Illus. by Meg Wohlberg. Macmillan, 1940. \$1.50.

The four lively children of a minister's family are extricated from some difficult situations by the charm of the kitten, Elijah the Fishbite. Children will enjoy Elijah's conquest of one hostile adult after another. The artist has caught the soft furriness of a kitten very well.

**Animals Nobody Knows.** By Ivan T. Sanderson. Illus. by the author. Viking, 1940. \$2.00.

Twenty-one strange creatures are pictured and described here. The brief essays give a great deal of information without being too technical. As the title indicates, the animals described are those rarely seen in zoos, or in books. The clarity and accuracy of text, and interest of subject matter, make the book one that children will return to repeatedly.

**Muscles and Brains.** Written and illus. by Syd Hoff. Dial Press, 1940. \$1.00.

This is not only funny to adults, but very funny to children. The cartoon-style drawings, the situations, and the happy ending are all comic-strip material at its best—the technique and plot that children love.

**The Little History of the United States.** By Mabel Pyne. Illus. by the author. Houghton Mifflin, 1940. \$1.75.

Not a connected story, but brief notes on events, chronologically arranged. The short paragraphs are lavishly illustrated; the language is simple, and the incidents selected are mainly those of peace. Sometimes the brevity is confusing. There is nothing, for example, to indicate that James Watt was not an American. The author is careful to explain difficult words—"treaty" and "constitution." One can imagine a small child studying the pictures while an adult reads the text aloud. Third and fourth graders, of course, can read it for themselves.

Children's literature is still in need of a stirring, well-integrated, and not-too-technical history of the United States.

**Auno and Tauno.** A story of Finland. By Marguerite Henry. Illus. by Gladys Rourke Blackwood. Albert Whitman, 1940. \$1.00.

The book has more plot and humor of situation than is usually found in stories for the primary grades. The Finnish twins are lovable, and well individualized. The illustrations in three colors are bright, and the print large. A good book for the primary book shelves.

**Pedro.** By Marjorie Flack and Karl Larsson. Illus. by Karl Larsson. Macmillan, 1940. \$2.00.

Pedro comes down from his mountain village to help his parents sell their pottery at the fiesta of San Gaudalope in Taxo, Mexico. The story relates how he got the position of mozo with the American lady; how he found an American friend of his own age; and how he was enabled to go to school. There is one exciting incident, and a good deal of interesting information and consistent character drawing. The illustrations are soft and rich in color.

**Big Road Walker.** By Eula G. Duncan. Based on stories told by Alice Cannon. Stokes, 1940. \$1.75.

This is a collection of folk-stories told to the author's children by a North Carolina Negro cook. The characters are Big Road Walker, a giant; his all-powerful little wife, Hokey, who is not only the brains of the family, but can work magic as well; their children, Mean O My, Crabby Jo May, Tubba Labba, and Iba Diddy; their servants; an ever-increasing group of animals—Grandfather Panter, Black Bottom, the bear, the bull dog with red eyes, and others.

The many amazing tales are told in matter-of-fact language, and in great detail. Children will like them because they are genuine Negro folk-lore, with the generosity, zest for life, and naive appropriation of what is desired that characterize simple folk. The author is especially to be commended for the able way in which she suggests dialect without extensive misspelling. Hokey remarks to the bull dog, after she captures him, "You big and bad, and you knows everything. You been everywhere, and you done everything, but I got you."

**Akka, Dwarf of Syracuse.** By Agnes Carr Vaughan. Illus. by Elizabeth Tyler Walcott. Longmans, Green, 1940. \$2.00.

A book like this leaves a reviewer astonished that so much effort of research and scholarship should have



*Elijah the Fishbite.* By Agnes Sligh Turnbull. Macmillan.

been put into the gathering of material and so little energy devoted to making it readable to young people. In spite of the opportunities offered by the time and setting (Syracuse and Egypt in the Third Century, B.C.) and by such familiar names as Archimedes, the book is dull reading. The story lags. No real action takes place for 75 or 80 pages, and such incidents as are used are handled with too much subtlety and indirectness.

The author declares in her preface that this is the story of Akka. Competing in interest, however, is the story of the twins of Syracuse, who hold the greater interest for child readers. Even if the author had succeeded in making this a well-unified story of Akka, it would hardly be desirable reading for children because of its obnoxious theme—the abduction and brutal dwarfing of children by fastening them to boards. Akka is consumed with the ambition to be large, and has been told that he will attain normal size when he sees double. The Syracusan twins furnish the illusion of double-vision.

It is true that much information, interesting to adults, is given. The author emphasizes especially ancient prejudices and superstitions about twins. Indeed, as has been pointed out, she is so intent on giving information that both Akka and the twins are overshadowed by historical facts and personages. The book violates the principle of unity of interest.

**Seven Diving Ducks.** By Margaret Friskey. Illus. by Lucia Patton. David McKay, 1940. \$1.00.

A picture book in two colors for very little children. The story concerns the seventh little duckling who was cowardly about swimming and diving, and how he overcame his fear. A gay, wholesome story.

**Happy Times in Czechoslovakia.** By Libushka Bartusek. Illus. by Yarka Bures. Foreword by Eleanor Roosevelt. Knopf, 1940. \$2.00.

St. George's Day, Easter, Whitsun, Harvest, and Christmas as observed by a country family. The strange old rituals, the picture of safe and happy family life, and the bright drawings make this book beautiful and interesting.

**Skwee-Gee.** By Darwin and Hildegard Teilhet. Illus. by Hardie Gramatky. Doubleday Doran, 1940. \$1.50.

The efforts of a devoted toy bear to find his spoiled little master, and his eventual adoption by a little girl who loves and takes care of her toys. The authors have animated their little hero with a personality that children will love. Perhaps the style is too explanatory at times, and the story slowed down by too much factual narration, but children will like Skwee-Gee anyway. Good for reading aloud to children under 8.



*Animals Nobody Knows.* By Ivan T. Sanderson. Viking.

#### UPPER GRADES

**Meehevee.** Being an account of the commerce-raiding cruise of the United States frigate Essex into the South Pacific Seas under command of Capt. David Porter, U. S. Navy, Anno 1812-14. Written and illus. by Lt. (jg) Raymond J. Toner, U.S.N.R. Albert Whitman, 1940. \$2.00.

The very title, Meehevee, calls into question the suitability of this volume as a book for children, for this is the lispng mispronunciation of Lt. M'Keever's name by a princess of the Marquesas. There is a degree of sophistication here that some persons may object to in a children's book. In addition to this, there are other qualities that make it necessary to place the book at the right level of maturity and intelligence; for the book is important enough to deserve appreciative readers.

For the advanced and somewhat mature child, it is excellent reading, and of unquestioned merit. It is a highly ethical story, for the author achieves a fine realization of the "age-old aristocratic tradition of the sea."

Except for the character of M'Keever, the story is historical. It deals with a stirring chapter in the annals of the United States Navy—the exploits of the frigate Essex in the Pacific during the War of 1812.

The author is a masterly story-teller. There is something reminiscent of Stevenson in the atmosphere and quick action of the opening pages. And although

there is dignity in the narrative, it still possesses the flavor of a good salty sea-yarn. Although the book is M'Keever's story, the other characters are alive and strong, consistently drawn and consistently developed. The story-teller's art is manifest in the building of a structure that can hold together such a varied and life-like group of "man-o'-war-men" without loss of unity.

The extensiveness of the research and the number of sources involved are remarkable. Material was obtained through letters, journals, family records furnished by descendants of the principal characters, and the Naval and Marine archives were also searched for information concerning the events described. This being the case, the book is more than just a story; it is a part of our national tradition.

Returning briefly to the question of sophistication. In this story, the Essex puts in to Nooaheeva, a port in the Marquesas, where there develop romantic interludes between the crew and the Polynesian women. Details are not overemphasized, and the treatment could in no way offend an adult. The situation is worked out artistically and ethically for the reader when, in the end, Captain Porter offers M'Keever his choice of a life like that of the beach-comber, Wilson, or the responsibilities of a naval officer.

No review should omit mention of the stirring account of the Essex's last splendid fight. A remarkably fine book for superior children and adults.

**Yukon Holiday.** By Felice Fieldhouse. Illus. by Raymond Lufkin. Longmans, Green, 1940. \$2.00.

A strange and beautiful setting and exciting incidents will recommend this volume to girl-readers in the upper grades. Frances Ramsay, fresh from high school in San Francisco, takes a job as teacher in Fort Windsor, in the Yukon Territory, for the winter. Here she meets the fine people of the North, shares the hardships and excitement of the rigorous life, and undergoes two hazardous experiences. Added to these, for good measure, is a hint of romance.

**Edra of the Islands.** By Marjorie Medary. Illus. by Dorothy Baley. Longmans, Green, 1940. \$2.00.

The islands off Nova Scotia are the background of this story. A new world opens to Edra when she takes a job as waitress at a summer hotel. How she is able to brighten the drab lives of her family on their small island, and how she solves the human problems that arise in her work make a wholesome novel for older girls. The interest centers mainly in human relationships, although the story is helped along by a slight mystery and a hard storm.

**About Spiders.** Introducing Arachne. By Elaine V. Emans. Drawings by Viola A. Young. Photographs by Lee Passmore and O. C. Kuehn. Dutton, 1940.

This book is remarkable for the extensiveness of detailed information given; it is well organized and comprehensive. The author has a poet's devotion to detail, and a sympathy and even affection for her subject; at the same time, she appears to be meticulously accurate. Her sources are reliable. To say that the book is interesting is to say a great deal, for the literature on spiders is voluminous.

There may be some minor objections to the book scientifically. For example, the author states that only one spider (the Black Widow) is poisonous. She probably means that only this spider is deadly, for she admits that the bites of many spiders are mildly poisonous. Furthermore, she describes the symptoms following the Black Widow's bite, but gives no first-aid measures.

#### PICTURE MAPS

**Children Round the World.** A Picture Costume Map. By F. Haase. R. R. Bowker. \$1.50.

The map is blue and white, with the small figures in bright colors. A few beloved characters in children's books are indicated on the map of the United States (Paul Bunyan, Uncle Remus, Ramona), and the border is composed of book titles. The map would make a beautiful wall decoration for an elementary school library or classroom, for a picture map is endlessly fascinating.

**A Map of Famous Pirates, Buccaneers and Freebooters** who roamed the seas during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By Darby Harbold. Lebaron Bonney Co., 1938. Distributed by R. R. Bowker. \$1.00.

The map covers Africa and South America showing only a little of Europe, North America and Asia. It is vivid with bright yellow, black, white, and red. Pictures indicate the location of famous pirate captures, and the islands where pirates buried their treasure are marked. A large-scale map of the Carribean is inserted to provide space for a record of Sir Henry Morgan's activities. Captain Kidd's story is given briefly in an inset. This is a map to quicken anyone's pulse. It is excellent for school libraries.

**A Booklover's Map of the British Isles.** By Paul M. Paine, 1935. R. R. Bowker. \$2.00.

This is truly a booklover's map, for it assumes acquaintance with place-names and authors. Few of either are given. Titles are marked and, less frequently, author's birthplaces and homes. There are large-scale insets of London and Edinburgh. Cambridge is honored with a small picture and four entries (Spencer, Ma-caulay, Mr. Pepys' library, Herrick) but Oxford is marked with X and the words, "Home of Alice and the White Rabbit." This partisanship of the cartographer will not endear the map to Oxford men, but other lovers of English literature can study it by the hour with increasing delight.

## SUPPLEMENTARY REFERENCE

**In the Days of Ichabod.** By Jessie L. Duboc. Ann Arbor: Edwards Bros. 1939.

This little volume contains a wealth of anecdote, historical facts, and pictures of the Sleepy Hollow region. The chapter headings indicate its usefulness to literature teachers and librarians: "Sleepy Hollow and Tarrytown"; "Who's Who in the Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (the prototypes of Irving's characters); "Famous Buildings in Sleepy Hollow"; and "Sleepy Hollow and the Revolution" (especially the story of Major Andre). There are also a glossary and bibliography.

The pictures which Miss DuBoc has selected to illustrate her text must surely heighten young readers' interest in the Legend, if presented by a skillful teacher—the Van Cortlandt kitchen, the Washington Irving Memorial Bridge, and Katrina Van Tassel's home, to mention only a few.

The accuracy and worth of the volume is attested by the praise accorded it in *New York History*, the publication of the New York State Historical Association.

**The Wayside: Home of Authors.** By Margaret M. Lothrop. American Book Company, 1940.

To many of us, Concord, Massachusetts, is the most interesting town in the United States; and certainly the most interesting structure in Concord is the rambling buff-colored house on the Lexington Road which has been the home of eleven authors. Miss Margaret Lothrop, the author of this book, is the present owner of the house.

Her book is delightful reading—rich in incidents of the Revolution (for the Redcoats marched past the old house to the battle of Concord), of the Alcotts, of the Hawthornes, and finally, of her own family, the Lothropes. Miss Lothrop's mother was the author of the *Five Little Peppers* series, and her father, a Boston publisher. There are intimate glimpses of the lovable and charming people who have lived here; many of their letters are given.

The book is interesting in itself, and valuable for reference reading. It is a pity that the paging is inaccurate (pages 166-170 and 176-182) in certain copies.

## SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR EYE HEALTH

(Continued from page 303)

a perfectly matching glass eye of which she was exceedingly conscious. In order to cover up her difficulty when a test was given by a new teacher, she memorized the test chart and was able to read a very good portion of it with each eye. The teacher was greatly chagrined at the report of the school nurse to whom she had referred the child for tests: "right eye 20/20; left eye—very good for a glass eye!" Helen was supposed to have read the 20/40 line with a glass eye, a miracle indeed!

Teachers are burdened with many responsibilities and surely, as Dr. Buckingham states, should not be expected, under ordinary circumstances, to undertake correction of physical difficulties. But how greatly can they lighten their own labors and those of the children who come under their care, if they will assume their share in discovering physical defects, and in taking the logical steps necessary for correction. Their greatest asset, however, will come from sharing actively in the prevention of difficulties.



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